

# MEETING AGENDA

## North Carolina National Park, Parkway and Forests Development Council

*November 6, 2009*

*1:00 PM –3:00 PM*

*NCDENR Western Office*

*Swannanoa, NC*

*Members Present: Maxine Dalton, Nelda Holder, Jason Love, Bob McCollum, Jonathon Douthit*

*Guests: Matt Jarvis / NC Arboretum, Adrienne Wallace / NC State Parks, Greg Yates NC Division of Forest Resources, Mary Noel / US Forest Service, Phyllis Styles / Blue Ridge Forever*

Call to Order – Maxine Dalton called the meeting to order at 1:00. She welcomed council members and guests. Everyone took a few moments to introduce themselves. (Note that meeting summary was approved electronically so that members could forward to interested parties in a timely manner.)

Judy Francis explained that she and Myrna had found no one from the Department of Insurance that was willing to speak to the Council regarding risk assessment and the insurance industry on the topic of private property adjoining private lands. Judy spoke with Joan Creaseman in the Asheville office – who said she would help arrange a speaker but ultimately did not follow through with that.

Maxine then asked the agency partners to give brief updates and focus some comments on the adjoining land use issue. She emphasized that the council would like to be advocates on the agencies behalf to local officials and regional groups. The following comments were received:

Mary Noel from the US Forest Service stated that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is funding the Catawba Falls Access tract in McDowell County and partial payment of another tract further east; a total of \$1.3 million. USFS in NC is asking for \$5 million in LWCF in 2011 – including several tracts in the western region. They continue to partner with land trusts on these projects. They are receiving \$17 million in stimulus funds to rehab trails, recreation sites, and various fire-related projects. The rock slide on I-40 is on USFS land and they are working with NCDOT to get that resolved. There is a new ranger in Grandfather District – John Crockett. Lawsuits re: the Chattooga and Upper Tellico decisions are probably coming. The restoration groups focused on hemlock wooly adelgid, invasive plants, and early successional wildlife habitat continue their work. The Council could really help the USFS by supporting key land acquisitions, outreach and education to public officials on this issue, and

others like climate change. A big problem now is OHV encroachment from adjoining land uses. Law enforcement issues are time-consuming and there are few resources to do it well. There is not enough staff to adequately patrol public land holdings.

Greg Yates from the NC Division of Forest Resources said the budget is still very tight. The BRIDGE Program needs continued support –so please ask your legislature to support it. An aviation study concerning the division's aging fleet is being conducted by a private consulting firm can be used as a lobbying tool. Charles Taylor's property in Transylvania County is up for sale but there is no money to purchase it. It has the potential to be a good management partnership with other agencies. There is some reorganization inside the western region of DFR. They are combining Holmes and DuPont State Forest. Community protection plans are underway regarding fire fuel mitigation and communities at risk. There is Firewise program information and outreach on their website, but most effective outreach is through county ranger face-to-face contacts. Firewise recommendations are fairly well-received by many new developments – and some local governments are now looking at incorporating some Firewise recommendations in their codes.

Adrienne Wallace from NC State Parks said they have many planning projects underway for new facilities and existing facility expansion. The budget is lean and they lost 39 vacant positions, but no layoffs. Their staff is the best resource they have and they don't want to lose trained staff. The Legislature asked them to look at revenue issues and the potential for entry fees or other forms of revenue generation. We are conducting a study on this issue and will allow more public comment on the fee topic. There is a continued emphasis on sustainability issues and they are installing wind turbine at Jockey's Ridge State Park. The economy not good, but good land acquisition opportunities are out there now. We are not purchasing any land right now because there is no money for it. No movement at this point on Bottomless Pools. As far as adjoining land uses go, developments may infringe on parkland (shooting, dogs, unauthorized use, garbage dumping, pollution, erosion issues, invasive species from inappropriate landscaping, light pollution, gang member signs in more urbanizing areas, expansion can be difficult due to high land process of adjoining gated communities). The positive side is greenway connections, regional planning opportunities, and nearby fire departments. Social media provides an opportunity to bring in more people to more remote parks through sharing of web resources. Adjoining property owners can be "watchdogs" for you also. There is a legislative study committee to look at law enforcement consolidation throughout the state. This may mean they will lose law enforcement positions.

Phyllis Styles from the Blue Ridge Forever Coalition of land trusts said they are still trying to implement their Conservation Vision. They continue to work on raising resources for acquisition of priority lands.

Matt Jarvis said the Arboretum is small in acreage, but law enforcement staff is jack of all trades. There are lots of visitors and a lot of things can happen. Safety issues must always be addressed. We connect to USFS via trails – so they get lost hikers, schools kids, etc.

Judy Francis from NCDENR's Office of Conservation & Community Affairs said the SAMAB conference on climate change is in Asheville in mid-November and she has been planning that. She is also working on an alternative energy / wind turbine panel for the annual conference of the American Planning Association in 2010. The Blue Ridge Parkway 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events kick off in November in Cherokee, and she will present a panel at the parkway conference in 2010 regarding adjoining land use. She provided the council members and guest with copies of the newly released NCDENR strategic plan.

Maxine then asked the council members to give final comments on the draft Goals & Objectives document they worked on during the last meeting. She said the council should be more knowledgeable about funding and support for BRIDGE Program and asked for support to put this in the document. She also asked that a speaker that could elaborate on the BRIDGE program be invited to a future meeting. She also suggested that they review the law enforcement consolidation study.

Mary Noel from the US Forest Service offered to provide a speaker to talk about their acquisition priorities at a future meeting.

Judy Francis provided a handout about the status of the council's website development and the status of the Mountain Resources Commission appointments.

Jonathon Douthit said the North Shore Road settlement money is in the federal budget in the maintenance portion. Settlement negotiations are going well and moving faster than anyone expected. The letter that the council sent had a big impact. Maxine let the council know that Dale Ditmanson had contacted her about the letter and told her he thought the methodology to arrive at the settlement amount was flawed. He also said he attends to negotiations as a technical resource and not as a negotiator. Maxine said she found a report done by Warren Wilson College while doing Google search, and the study defends the \$52 million amount. She will send a link to the study out to the Council members. Bob McCollum said the recent meeting of negotiators went well, there was no talk of disputing the settlement amount and progress is being made. Swain County is thankful for Governor Perdue's interest in this matter.

Jason Love and Nelda Holder presented a list of four options for a council name change. They are: Western North Carolina Public Lands Council, Governor's Council on Western North Carolina Public Lands, Western North Carolina Parklands Council, and Western North Carolina Public Lands Advisory Council. There was general consensus that the first option, Western North Carolina Public Lands Council, is the best title – and Bob McCollum offered to contact legislators to line up a sponsor for the name change.

Maxine Dalton gave a brief update on the status of the Madison County Comprehensive Land Use Plan and her involvement in advocating for its adoption. She said fire safety and interface issues will be included in the plan or the building code.

The council determined that their 2010 meeting dates will be on January 8, April 30, June (joint meeting w/ TN council), September 10, and November 5. Jason Love offered to do a presentation re: protections afforded waters of the state on public lands and actions needed if any. He has spoken with several experts who explained that water policy in the east is not the same as in the west. It is based on court precedent and is a state issue that is addressed case-by-case. He thought it may be outside of the scope of this council because it is based on court precedent and not policy. Maxine expressed concern that this will become a bigger issue in the future. Jason said he thought it was an issue that is too complex to be part of our work plan at this time. Possibly climate change would be a better venue to talk about it. We'll bring this back for additional at future meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.